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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9852  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000005

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2019  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: GAZA SITUATION REPORT, JANUARY 2, 15:00

REF: A. TEL AVIV 2930  
[1](#)B. TEL AVIV 2922  
[1](#)C. TEL AVIV 2906

Classified By: A/DCM Marc Sievers for reasons 1.4 (B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Local and international media highlighted FM Livni's January 1 comments in Paris that a ceasefire was unnecessary and would give Hamas time to regroup. Israeli troops deployed around Gaza have relaxed their posture, but remain prepared for ground incursions. Rocket and mortar strikes against southern Israeli towns have decreased, but Grad-type rockets continue to impact Be'er Sheva; no additional Israeli deaths were reported on January 1 or 2. Israeli Air Force (IAF) operations against Hamas targets continued on January 1 and 2, killing Nizar Rayan, reportedly one of the IDF's top targets and the first senior Hamas official killed in Operation Cast Lead, along with 15 members of his family, according to press reports. The IAF also destroyed a mosque reportedly serving as a weapons depot and communications hub. On the morning of January 2, Embassy Tel Aviv, Consulate-General Jerusalem and Embassy Amman facilitated the evacuation of 27 American citizens and their family members from Gaza. END SUMMARY.

#### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

[1](#)2. (SBU) After meeting with French President Sarkozy in Paris on January 1, FM Livni reiterated the cabinet's December 31 decision to reject a 48-hour ceasefire, saying there was no humanitarian crisis in Gaza and therefore no need for a humanitarian ceasefire. Sarkozy restated his intention to visit the region next week. On January 1, France ceded the rotating EU presidency to the Czech Republic, which announced plans to dispatch a delegation to Jerusalem, Ramallah, Amman, and Cairo on January 4 in support of the French ceasefire proposal. Turkish PM Erdogan's diplomatic tour continued on January 1 with a stop in Cairo after meeting Syrian President Asad on December 31; he is expected to visit Riyadh on January 3. Turkish DCM Bozay provided a readout of President Gul's January 1 conversation with President Peres. Gul reportedly expressed understanding of Israel's need to take action against terrorist attacks, noting that Turkey was also a victim of terrorism, but cautioned Peres that the operation needed to be brought to a quick conclusion due to the impact on Muslim public opinion. Peres responded that he hoped Israeli military operations could be completed soon, but said Hamas was not showing any sign of readiness to accept a ceasefire on terms acceptable to Israel. Local reaction to the December 31 statement by Arab League FMs has been muted.

[1](#)3. (C) Neither the inner cabinet nor full security cabinet have convened since the December 31 meeting in which cabinet members agreed upon conditions for a ceasefire and ended press speculation of dissent by DM Barak; the next regular cabinet meeting will be on January 4. While reportedly pushing for a major but brief ground incursion, Haaretz reports that defense officials recommend parallel preparation of a diplomatic exit strategy that would include an agreement brokered with Hamas; FM Livni remarked in Paris that a ceasefire negotiated directly with Hamas was unacceptable as it would legitimize the group's hold over Gaza.

[1](#)4. (U) Polling results in advance of Knesset elections still

scheduled for February 10 continue to show gains for DM Barak,s Labor Party, with unclear results for FM Livni,s Kadima Party and former PM Netanyahu,s Likud Party. Media commentators agree that Barak has the most to gain from the Gaza operation, though much depends upon its outcome. A Ma,ariv-Teleseeker poll published January 2 shows the Labor Party earning 16 Knesset seats if elections were held today (up from 11 on December 25), while Likud and Kadima would each take 28 (down from 29 for Likud and 30 for Kadima). The same poll showed public support for the ongoing operations against Hamas at 93 percent, with 40 percent favoring continued air attacks only, 41 percent in favor of a ground incursion, and nine percent advocating an immediate ceasefire. 77 percent of the public believes Israel should only accept a ceasefire if it includes negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit. (Note: The Ma,ariv-Teleseeker poll showed significantly stronger support for ongoing operations in Gaza than a January 1 Ha,aretz poll that included Israeli Arabs, though their influence on government decision making is minimal, leading us to believe they were excluded from the Ma,ariv poll.) The Likud Party has put up billboards all over Tel Aviv with the slogan "strong together" and in smaller print, "Likud supports our soldiers and the residents of the south." In keeping with Bibi Netanyahu's pledge to suspend his electoral campaign during the fighting, the billboards do not refer to Netanyahu directly.

#### MILITARY OPERATIONS

15. (S) The Israeli Defense Forces, (IDF) ground buildup appears to have slowed after the initial influx of armor and infantry to the Gaza perimeter. Elements of at least three armor and four infantry brigades remain deployed along the

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northern Gaza strip. DAO reports no indications of an imminent ground incursion. IDF maintenance and logistical activity continued on January 2, but IDF troops displayed a more relaxed posture than on January 1. DAO assesses that the IDF has not yet deployed sufficient forces for a deep, sustained ground operation, but that more limited incursions into northern Gaza could occur with little or no warning.

16. (SBU) Despite cleared skies over Gaza, the pace of Israeli Air Force (IAF) operations has decreased, with 48 sorties on January 1, according to the IDF. Media reports speculate that the IAF is running out of quality targets and may soon be forced to either scale back operations or turn the fighting over to ground forces. IAF operations on January 1 included a strike that killed senior Hamas official Nizar Rayan in his Jabaliya home, reportedly along with his four wives and 11 of his children. Rayan was reportedly on the IDF's list of top Hamas targets, and was the first senior Hamas political official killed in Operation Cast Lead. IAF jets also bombed a mosque in the Jabaliya area that, according to IDF sources, served as a command and control hub for Hamas militants and storage site for Grad-type and Qassam rockets. As of 12:00 on January 2, the IAF had carried out an additional 20 strikes, mostly targeting the homes of Hamas militants; IDF sources stress that residents received prior warnings to evacuate by leaflet, phone, or text message, although one prominent commentator quoted military sources as saying that at least in the Rayan attack, no one answered the phone when it rang 10 minutes prior to the attack.

17. (SBU) IDF sources report that 35 rockets, including 10 Grad-type, and four mortar rounds were fired into Israel on January 1, with several rockets striking in or around Be'er Sheva, with no deaths or injuries. As of 15:00 on January 2 approximately 20 additional rockets had been launched from Gaza, impacting Ashkelon, Sdot Negev, and Eshkol; one woman was reported injured by shrapnel. Israeli towns and cities within 40km of Gaza remain under special alert, expanded from 30km after rockets began striking Be'er Sheva on December

131. Schools remain closed, and residents have been asked to stay in or near shelters.

#### AMCIT EVACUATION

18. (SBU) On the morning of January 2 Embassy Tel Aviv, Consulate-General Jerusalem, and Embassy Amman coordinated

the evacuation of 27 American citizens (Amcits) and non-Amcit family members from Gaza via the Erez crossing; an additional seven Amcits on the initial evacuation list chose to remain in Gaza. As of 14:00 the 27 evacuees were proceeding through the Allenby border crossing from Israel into Jordan after transiting Israel under embassy escort. A total of 234 third country nationals were evacuated through Erez during the day.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

¶9. (SBU) The Office for Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) announced that 60 trucks carrying 1,360 tons of humanitarian supplies entered Gaza from Israel via the Kerem Shalom crossing on January 1, including 10 UN Relief and Works Agency trucks with cooking oil and seven with flour, three trucks with medical supplies from Egypt, seven trucks with food from Jordan, and two International Committee of the Red Cross trucks carrying medical supplies. 64 trucks entered Gaza on January 2, according to COGAT (of 72 that were initially expected). According to USAID, the Kerem Shalom crossing remained open as of 15:00 on January 2, while the Rafah crossing into Egypt opened only briefly for the evacuation of 17 wounded Palestinians and entry of six Egyptian trucks carrying medical supplies. The Karni grain conveyor and Nahal Oz fuel pipeline remained closed on January 1 and 2.

¶10. (SBU) Turkish DCM Bozay told us today that Turkey had completed the coordination with COGAT of substantial Turkish humanitarian assistance, including five ambulances, 330 tons of flour, 11,000 dried food parcels (11 tons), and 13 tons of medical supplies, all of which has now entered Gaza. Bozay said he received full cooperation from Israeli officials, including clearance of the ambulances through the Ashdod port within two days. Based on the success of these shipments, the Turks reportedly are planning additional humanitarian relief, including a number of small generators for Gaza's hospital.

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